DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 055 636 LI 003 191

TITLE	Information and Referral Services: Referral Procedures; Working Draft.
INSTITUTION	American Rehabilitation Foundation, Minneapolis, Minn. Inst. for Interdisciplinary Studies.
SPONS AGENCY	Administration on Aging (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	28 Feb 71
NOTE	16p.; (0 References)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Community Services; *Followup Studies; Information Centers; *Information Needs; *Information Services; Manuals; *Older Adults; *Referral; Social Services

ABSTRACT

Information-giving limits itself to the simple giving of information while referral represents the hand that assists the client in contacting the service he wishes to reach. In addition to information-giving, referral may include: directing the person to a specific agency, how to get there and whom to see; providing encouragement to the person to contact the agency; making an appointment for the person at the agency; assisting the person in making an appointment with an agency; and escorting the person to the agency. The reasons for referral, the referral process, how much referral to offer, the information needed for referral and the referral card are included in this manual. Appendix A is a referral form. (Other manuals in this series are available as LI 003187-003190 and LI 003192 through LI 003195). (Author/NH)

ED0 556636

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Information and Referral Services:

REFERRAL PROCEDURES

(Working Draft)

Prepared by:

Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies

of the

American Rehabilitation Foundation
123 East Grant Street
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403

Under a Title IV Grant

from the

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
Social and Rehabilitation Service
Administration on Aging

February 28, 1971

AA 001 003 191

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements . . . . . .

Chapter 1 - What is Referral? 1

Chapter 2 - Why Add Referral? Who Needs It? Under What Circumstances? 3

Chapter 3 - The Referral Process 6

Chapter 4 - How Much Referral - Degrees of Linkage 8

Chapter 5 - Information Required for Referral 9

Chapter 6 - Reporting Back - The Referral Card 10

Chapter 7 - Conclusion 12

Appendix e - Referral Form 13

Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge the contributions of persons who have had a major role in the development of this series of manuals. At the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies, special consultant, Mrs. Shirley Zimmerman, deserves a very special thanks. Without her effort, the manuals would not exist. Mrs. Martha Cushing and Dr. Aaron Lowin also made significant contributions in the development of specific manuals. Professor Alfred J. Kahn's helpful guidance during the development of the manuals is also deeply appreciated. Other consultants who reviewed the manuals and made useful suggestions include Miss Marjorie Carpenter, Mrs. Corazon Doyle, Mr. Alfred Hirsch, Mr. Lester Fox, Mr. Jack Ossofsky and the National Council on the Aging, Dr. Etta Saloshin, Mrs. Virginia Stewart and Call For Action, and Mr. Douglas Thomas. We also wish to thank Mr. Gerald Bloedow, Executive Secretary of the Minnesota Governor's Citizens Council on Aging, for his time and help.

Finally, a very sincere debt of gratitude must be paid to the project secretarial staff, Mrs. Sharon Harrison, Mrs. Donna Rortvedt, and Miss Diane Weinke, for their patience and endurance in unscrambling and assembling the rough materials into readable form.

Nicholas Long, Ph.D.
Project Director
February 28, 1971

Chapter 1: What is Referral?

Information-giving is only the first of several services available at the information and referral (I & R) center. Information-giving limits itself to the simple giving of information. It does nothing about seeing that the person reaches the services he seems to need. Connecting the person with the available service is what referral is all about. Referral represents the hand that assists the client in contacting the service he wishes to reach.

Referral is so closely intertwined with information-giving that the distinction is difficult to identify. Information-giving includes what you already know:

- providing the person factual answers to straightforward questions
- informing the person about the community resource most relevant to his problem or inquiry
- telling the person where a resource is located, how to get there, and whom to contact for an appointment
- informing the person about the functions and services of an agency, i.e., the public welfare department or Social Security office, and the law that governs it.

Referral does all this but it does more. Referral actively tries to connect the person to the resource which appears to be most relevant to his problem, once the person has decided he would like to use it

or has indicated that he may be a danger to himself or others. In addition to the information-giving activities listed above, referral may include:

- directing the person to a specific agency; how to get there; whom to see
- providing encouragement to the person to contact the agency
- making an appointment for the person with an agency
- assisting the person in making appointment with an agency
- escorting the person to the agency

Thus, referral pertains specifically to those activities that are deliberately designed to mesh or link people and services together. Referral is a surer way of fulfilling the center's linkage mission than is information-giving alone.

Chapter 2: Why Add Referral? Who Needs It? Under What Circumstances?

What is the point, though, of enlarging the center's scope to include referral if the center is already providing an inforation service of recognized value to many older people?

Fear and Uncertainty

For one thing, you probably will observe that many older people will not use information about community provisions that could truly help them. They may hear you; they may agree that a service would be beneficial to them, and yet they do not take the logical next step of contacting the agency providing the service. This may occur for several reasons. An older person may not like to ask for help. To do so may not be consistent with how he believes people should manage their lives and his notions of self-dependence. He may feel that others will think less of him if he asks for help, or he may not be sure how he will be received by an agency. He may worry that no one will notice him, or that if he is noticed, no one will pay attention to him. Perhaps the agency seems too far away and impersonal to him. If the agency is downtown, it may be hard for him to get there, and all the changes that have taken place in most downtowns in recent years may be confusing to him. At the same time, if the agency is in a neighborhood in which the older person does not live, he may be equally confused because the neighborhood may be unfamiliar to him. This too may make him less sure of himself than he otherwise might be. In short, fear and uncertainty may prevent many older people from using information about community resources that they agree might be

helpful to them. They need someone to pave the way for them, to take the first steps for them, to introduce them to the agency that can help them.

Physcial Incapacity and Limitations

A referral service is sometimes mandated because of a person's incapacity. Sometimes a person's energy will become depleted just by calling the center. To ask him to call another agency would be beyond his physical endurance. Or consider the elderly person who lives alone, stumbles and falls in his house, becomes frightened and calls the center. He needs someone who will contact sources of help for him because he is physically and/or emotionally unable to do so himself.

Danger to Self and Others

Senile or mentally unbalanced people also may require referral from time to time, particularly if their behavior is causing a problem to those around them. Consider, for example, the senile person who uses his yard for a garbage dump. His neighbors become upset and call the center to complain about the health hazard he is creating. You should also expect the occasional call from neighbors or friends who are concerned about the older person who has lost all interest in life, has stopped eating and seems to be starving himself to death. These older people obviously are unable to take the action necessary to get the services they need even if information about these resources were given to them. They need someone to take this action for them.

Agency Requirement

Some agencies will not provide service without a referral from another source. This means that some authorized agency, such as the center, must have interviewed the older person first before he can receive service from that particular agency. This is where the resource file will again be helpful. The intake and referral procedures of each agency, included in the file, will indicate whether a formal referral is necessary.

These, then, are the reasons and circumstances for a referral service. Not all older people contacting the center will require referral. Many will be able to proceed on their own once they have the information they need. But for those older people who may be too fearful, too sick, too upset, too emotionally or mentally unbalanced, or physically incapacitated, or in situations required by an agency, referral may be the only way in which linkage of people to services can take place. Just plain information-giving will not do the job.

Chapter 3: The Referral Process

Various elements of the referral process have already been suggested, but, to make certain all points are covered, a brief review may be helpful.

The referral process begins with the initial interview and exploration of the person's problem. This provides the opportunity for you to assess the person's need for referral. It also provides the basis for you to refer to the resource file for information about the community provision most pertinent to the person's problem or situation. After you have transmitted the information from the resource file to the person, you should then allow the person time to consider what you have told him. He may then wish to discuss with you further the advantages and disadvantages of the community provision he is considering and to weigh other possibilities.

Once the person had decided that he would like to use a particular provision or agency, you should check the resource file again regarding the referral procedure preferred by that agency. If you are uncertain that the agency will accept the person for referral, call the contact person listed on the agency's card and describe the person's problem to him to determine the likelihood that the person will be accepted for referral and how soon. Once this has been determined, pass this information on to the person as soon as possible. Allow him time to again express his doubts and concerns and to ask additional questions about the agency under consideration. Even though you may have already done so, you may want to explain to him again how the agency's service may

may be helpful to him and, as precisely as you can, what to expect when he gets there. Make sure that you also give him the following information:

- the name of the agency
- the address of the agency
- the phone number of the agency
- the name of a specific person to contact at the agency
- information on how to get to the agency

In some cases, you also may have to provide escort service to the older person to assist in the referral process. This is discussed in the manual Information and Referral Service: Volunteer Escort Service.

The transition from the center to the service agency to which you are referring him may be upsetting and difficult for the person. He may need considerable encouragement from you if he is to make it successfully. This may require a substantial amount of time, effort, and patience on your part.

Chapter 4: How Much Referral - Degrees of Linkage

After the person has decided to approach a particular community agency, there is the question of the degree to which you should participate in the referral process. Except in emergency situations and in situations in which the person may be mentally, physically, or emotionally unable to take action on his own behalf, this will depend on the individual and his situation.

Many older people will want and be able to make their own arrangements and appointments with agencies. Others may be able to do so after they have been sufficiently reassured that they will benefit from the agency's services, be well-received, and not be stigmatized. In other cases, however, this will not happen. The person will not be able to proceed on his own with or without your encouragement. He will not get to the agency providing the services he needs unless you call the agency for him or unless you literally take him there by the hand. The degree to which you participate in the referral process depends very much on the person, his situation, and the urgency of his problem. At the same time, because the center is primarily a telephone rather than a face-to-face service, it is unlikely that you will be able to assist the person in making his own appointment with a service agency by having him call the agency in your presence. This is another way of facilitating the referral process, but it is not applicable in the operation of the center as it is envisioned.

Chapter 5: Information Required for Referral

In order for the service agency to be helpful, it must have a minimum amount of information about the person and his problem. Remembering the confidential nature of the information with which you are dealing, you first must obtain the person's permission to share his problem with the agency to which he is being referred. Explain to him why the information must be shared and the confidence with which it will be treated. Remember, unless the person is mentally incompetent, you must always secure his permission to share information about him with others, including another agency.

The amount of detail required for referral will depend on the individual agency. The minimum information you must provide includes the following:

- person's name
- person's address
- person's phone number
- reason for referral
- name of referring person
- name of referring agency.
- address of referring agency
- phone number of referring agency
- date

Some agencies may be willing to accept this information over the phone. Others may request a referral card or letter (see appendix).

Chapter 6: Reporting Back - The Referral Card

The referral card should be completed and returned to you by the agency after the first interview. It should be returned in a stamped, addressed envelope to protect the person's privacy. (See appendix.) The returned card should indicate 1) if the person got to the agency and 2) if he is now being seen or has been seen by the agency for service. This information will provide important feedback for determining the accuracy of your referrals.

If you find that a large number of your referrals are not being accepted, a number of possibilities come to mind. You may not be using the resource file properly; the information in the resource file may be outdated or inaccurate; or the rejecting agency may not be meeting its obligations. In any event, you will have to find out which of these possibilities is the case by contacting the person and, in some instances, the agencies in question directly. More will be said about this in follow-up and advocacy. For purposes of referral, however, it is essential that you make sure that the information you are using from the resource file is accurate and up to date.

The Referral Letter

Some agencies normally request letters of referral which try to summarize the history and diagnosis of the person's problem in some detail. Because the center is primarily a telephone service, it has only limited knowledge about a person's background and problem. Therefore, these kinds of letters are not within the purview of an information

and referral center for the elderly. This should be made clear to all agencies. The center can provide only very basic information such as outlined above.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This, then, concludes referral, a service that tries to make the linkage between the person and the services he needs more secure through specific kinds of activities, such as, directing the older person to a specific agency for a specific problem, calling to make an appointment with another agency for the older person, and writing cards of referral. Referral is the logical extension of the information service you have already developed and is meant to be added only after you, yourself, feel ready for it.

Appendix

Referral Form

The following person has been referred to your agency for service. Please complete the attached form and return to our office in the enclosed, stamped, addressed envelope. Thank you.

Date of referral _____

Person's Name _____

Address _____ _____

Reason for referral (please specify)

Financial _____ Legal _____

Health _____ Personal-social services _____

Housing _____ Transportation _____

Home helps _____ Other _____

Leisure time _____ _____

Name of referring person (signature) _____

Information and Referral Center for the Elderly

Address _____

Phone number _____

Referral Response

Date _____

Person's name _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

Did person get to your agency? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, has person been seen or is he being seen by your agency for service?

Yes ____ No ____

Name of respondent _____
(signature)

Agency _____

Address _____